

STATEMENT OF JERRY SCANLAN

SUSSEX COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRUSTEE

WHY NOW DO I AGAIN SPEAK OUT?

As the public and I have patiently waited for the promised Sussex County Community College Board of Trustees promised “investigation” about the issues surrounding me, none has occurred. The Committee has not requested my statement, sought my participation in an investigation, my positions, or my side of the issues.

Serving as the Vice Chair of the Sussex County Community College Board of Trustees and the subject of a subcommittee investigation, which is believed will issue a report today, where are my rights and protections in denying me the opportunity to present my side of the issues to the Committee?

Officials and members of the Sussex County Community College community have stated that there are official written and adopted standards and policies of the College which are applicable regarding social media accounts, postings, and conduct yet none have been identified.

Further, I have never seen, been provided a copy or asked to respond or comment on the Subcommittee Report, if one even exists, and upon which the Board of Trustees is being asked to take actions.

Further I have been precluded in participating in the full Board of Trustees closed session meeting today, such that I can neither hear the purported case against me nor present my positions

There is an obvious rush to judgment by Sussex County Community College Board of Trustees without fundamental fairness and founded on a full investigation. And, I speak out now not only for me, but whoever is next to be treated this way.

While I do not disagree that the Sussex County Community College Board of Trustees has a right and duty to conduct a full and fair investigation, what is being conducted is “Cowboy Justice”: Hang’em first and try’em later.”

Thus, the Sussex County Community College Board of Trustees, as a committee or as a whole, has chosen not to hear from me, allow me to present my side, and thus I again will not be heard from today. I must now seek to be heard publicly now and I am sure again in the future.

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

As the Vice Chair and for almost eight years as a Trustee, I have faithfully, proudly, professionally, and without incident or criticism served as a member of the Sussex County Community College Board of Trustees. What was to be reviewed were my actions as a private citizen. I neither represented myself nor held myself out as a Trustee of the Sussex County Community College. Yet, I acknowledge my actions and inactions have reflected poorly not only on me, but my family, my community, and our College.

My conduct outside my role with the College has become the public focus. It involves issues of concern because of my allowing the re-tweeting or sharing of the tweets and the content of others that were characterized insensitive, uncivil, and inappropriate.

I acknowledged my wrong, disavowed and disclaimed their content, and repeatedly offered a public apology. What I have done and what has thereafter occurred, cannot be recalled or erased. Yet, the subsequent confusion of the events and the fictions that have developed have overtaken the facts of the incident. Contrary to who I am and how I am known, I have been represented as a bigot, racist, and insensitive person. None of this can ever be corrected or explained.

In repeatedly offering a public apology, I understand an apology is much more than merely saying “I’m sorry.” In my actions, I approached that apology as an admission that I was wrong in what I did, I accepted responsibility for my actions, I expressed regret that it occurred, and I asked for forgiveness for my actions and inactions.

Yet, I knew this was not enough and I needed to do and offer more. As the matters evolved and developed with the Sussex County Community College community, I sought to go further in an attempt to foster healing, reconciliation, and repair of the damage for which I accepted responsibility.

It was with an idea and thinking outside the box, that I then engaged with the College. Offering to sponsor a broad community educational experience and teaching moment, I sought to arrange with

a recognized and responsible academic institution a public presentation and educational session to address the issues of civility and cultural sensitivity.

With my previously living in foreign countries and well before my nearly eight years of service as a Trustee, I had learned that education can foster understanding and acceptance, which in these circumstances would benefit and enlighten all. It would offer our community an experience to engage and grow as a more vibrant community and hopefully prevent others from making errors similar to mine. Again, the silence of the Sussex County Community College Board of Trustees in seeking to interview me, was now met with no consideration of my offer but rather rejection.

My loyalty and love for the College and its community, brought me to offer to resign as the Vice Chair of the Sussex County Community College Board of Trustees, which too has not been considered or accepted in their rush to judgment and my condemnation, just to close the matter.

Some have said to me that the Trustees are listening to and succumbing to groups and voices seeking my ouster, condemnation, and removal. While there have been those calls, I believe that the Trustees will, as always, act with courage and commitment to doing the right thing.

What Needs To Be Done:

We as a Board of Trustees must acknowledge we have failed the College, the Community and our mission:

- We have adopted no ethical code and standards of conduct applicable here for the Trustees, staff or college community' Not platitudes and puff, but debated, reviewed, adopted, trained, and communicated as identifiable and announced standards and goals.
- We have adopted no personal use social media policies and guidelines for civil and appropriate engagement and communications, for education and discussion.
- We have not in this instance operated and conducted ourselves with transparency and openness, protecting the rights of all involved, which should not happen again. There is a need for process and procedure.

Finally, let me state now that I intend to serve out my term on the Board of Trustees, which ends at the end of October. This has not been a mere teaching moment but an awakening moment, It is not about what happens to me, but what happens next. It is not about how this ends for me but how the College grows from this experience.